Characters

- *sean david* photographer
- *michael* dancer
- *nevada* attorney
- *claire* model
- *earl* attorney

Scene 1

here is an old san francisco flat. rounded corners/ arches/ one large room with darkroom on right side/ in middle of room a luxurious antique sofa/ coffee table/ plants/ to right rear/ is a window/ huge with a fire escape/ can see Bay Bridge & some projects/ to the right of desk is a marvelous brass bed/ & rows & rows of books in carefully arranged grocer's boxes. there are photographs/ framed & loose/ copies & originals of diane arbus/ collis davis/ maldonado/ adams/ stieglitz/ van der zee, etc˙/ an enormous collection of music/ mirrors/ large ones wherever there is space/ to the left of the stage is a door to the flat covered with milky portraits of women carelessly tacked to it. there are carpets & pieces of sculpture/ placed exquisitely. this room has elegance from bein carefully scavenged/ nothin is new. no one knocks because sean never closes the door when he is there.

another area/ used by all characters except sean and michael/ is a plain black space. this area becomes wherever & whatever earl, claire & nevada need it to be.

(the set is blacked out so that the lights may create illusions of buildings in the background/ michael is in foreground reviewing a dance with very tiny movements. hear the clicking of a camera that becomes louder & louder. sean enters as d'artagnan is taking michael's picture. she becomes more animated & dances fully. sean keeps taking her picture/ then michael runs into what will be revealed as the bedroom. sean looks about for where she has disappeared to very casually. lights gradually come up. sean at his desk. michael at the bed. sean is in jeans. michael in his shirt & her panties, at the beginning, they were both in street clothes.)

SEAN

(enthusiastically)

those guys/ frank stewart & pinterhughes/ adger cowan/ they're from new york. & they have never seen what i see/ how cd they? there's no light anywhere like here in san francisco. wait til i get my first show/ there have never been any photographs like the ones i'm gonna take

MICHAEL

(taking a book from the shelves, crosses to stool)

hey wait/ you're going too fast/ i really want to see what yr talking abt

SEAN

have you got the cartier-bresson or the dorothea lange? are you really looking/ i mean seeing/ or just turning pages?

MICHAEL

i'm not just turning pages/ i'm feeling these photographs like i feel dance/ you know/ so a spark gets in my chest/ leaps thru my calves & thighs til i wanna jump up & down

SEAN

if these make you wanna do all that/ wait til you see my pictures/ i'm gonna have you absolutely beside yrself

MICHAEL

in a new world/ huh

SEAN

yeah, a new world/ our world

(sean & michael kiss/ earl nudges the door open)

SEAN

hey man/ good to see you/ what's goin on

EARL

hey sean/ i thought i wd come on by/ i gotta talk to you

SEAN

earl/ this is michael. she's an incredible dancer/ why pretty soon/ she'll be as good a dancer as i am a photographer

MICHAEL

don't pay him any mind/ earl. how are you doin

EARL

not so hot/ actually

MICHAEL

well sit down & relax. i'll get you a drink

EARL

sean/ yr really serious abt this photography stuff/ huh

SEAN

earl/ how many times do i have to tell you/ it is not stuff/ i am an artist/ committed to my art

EARL

it's just i dont understand/ i mean you were poor all yr life/ why you wanna be a poor starving artist

SEAN

what are you worried abt/ Mr˙ attorney/ i'm a struggling artist/ not a starving artist/ there's a big difference

MICHAEL

that's right/ we are struggling artists together/ right sean? we're gonna be together forever and ever/ and ever

EARL

so you'll both be at nevada's grand affair this evening then

MICHAEL

(to sean)

oh/ i didnt know we were sposed to go out tonite

SEAN

no. we're not. i have to go myself/ but you won't have to be bothered/ you wdnt have any fun

MICHAEL

i wdnt mind/ i'd love to go

SEAN

i said no/ that's that . . . awright

MICHAEL

i'll go where i please/ awright?

(michael exits to bedroom)

i thought it wd be awright/ i'll be there in a minute

EARL

damn sean/ i didn't mean to start anything

SEAN

forget it man/ it's nothing

EARL

good. cuz i really wanted to tell somebody

SEAN

you wanted to tell me

EARL

yeah you/ i cut claire loose

SEAN

(smiles)

why you wanna tell me that

EARL

cuz ever since she found out she cd be a model she aint been the same/ i cant keep up with her anymore/ not that i really want to/ how she's been acting/ it's not my thing man

SEAN

aw earl/ give her a chance/ she's just testing you/ that's all. wants to see if you can stand some competition

EARL

(looking at photos of claire)

how did you get her to do that/ pour jack daniels all over herself/ & get out the tub at the same time/ smiling/ how she does/ you know . . .

SEAN

it's art. art man. you want this one

EARL

yeah.

SEAN

you know/ claire's very imaginative

EARL

well i'ma get on my way

(michael has entered/ she sees the photograph)

MICHAEL

you leaving/ oh which one did sean give you?

(she takes photo)

who is that?

SEAN

earl's friend/ claire. i did her portrait for him

(michael puts photo in her bag)

EARL

(indignant)

sean/ i'ma see yr ass tonite at nevada's/awright

SEAN

don't count on it

EARL

michael/ you take real good care of yrself

MICHAEL

i'll be fine

(earl exits. michael begins gathering her things)

i'm going now too. i have a rehearsal

SEAN

awright baby/ sorry you gotta go so soon

MICHAEL

i dont/ i just dont like all the things i waz feeling while earl waz here

SEAN

don't worry abt anything earl says

MICHAEL

it waznt what earl said/ it waz you/ you the one said i cdnt go to that party/ & that woman's not earl's friend/ judging from those poses

SEAN

michael/ yr special & i think you can understand what i'm about to tell you

(sean gently leads michael to a stool & sits her down)

there are a number of women in my life/ who i plan to keep in my life/ & i'll never let any of them come between us/ between what we have in our world/ you hear.

(he caresses her)

you know alexandre dumas waz a clerk
who wrote at night & dreamed of joinin victor hugo's salon
his son/ alexandre dumas/ came by him accidentally
a seamstress with clean firm hands loved him very much.

i'm gonna be the alexandre dumas of my time/ both the father
and the son. alexandre dumas waz a rogue
witta gold watch & a emerald chain
his son hid from him neath the seamstress' bed
the child alexandre fought to stay in the dark
in the small space beneath.
his father's territories included the beds of paris
& the stage/ women who turned heads with honeysuckle voices
& skirts lifted to the hips/ not the constancy of their labor
not the love of their sons.
alexandre dumas sent his son away from him/
hurried to be famous/ his son waited til the moment waz right
& presented his father/ alexandre dumas/ with a man.
alexandre dumas guarded by a legion of fearless free-wheeling
honorable souls/ the count of monte cristo/
d'artagnan/ the man in the iron mask/
were no match for the yng man/ tendin his father.
he sent his son away from him/ thot abt the velvets he wd wear
on the champs-elysées/ alexandre dumas waz the man
who fathered his father as a child/ waz a man who waz lost/
waz a man loved in spite of his beauties.
alexandre dumas tore his son from his mother's
linen & sent his son away from him.
the threat of his own blood too much.
he sent his son to the forest to learn to disappear
but sons come back/ sons come back from where they are forgotten/
these photographs are for them/ they are gonna see our faces/
the visage of the sons/ the sons who wdnt disappear
niggahs who are still alive
i'm gonna go ona rampage/ a raid on the sleeping settlers
this camera's gonna get em

(sean takes photo of michael)

MICHAEL

i gotta hero you never even heard of

(sean takes another photo)

all i know is his name is james or jim/ shortened/
somebody very black & tall/ sophisticated for that time
'fore the war/ & he waznt born here either
born in paris & carried to detroit when he waz five
a french speakin niggah in detroit/ say 1926
& he waz intense
a rich colored boy in the Depression/ a pouter/ a brooder
who took a wife/ who didnt like just men in oooh/ maybe 1943
he hadda boat floatin in the detroit river
served in korea/ gotta be a physician/ did abortions
for girls bout my age when i waz in high school.
i know he owned bars & up from transient hotels

he dealt smack & never hadda son/ i always wanted to meet him.
my daddy & his girl rode in the backseat of the newest
& hottest car in nashville/ on the way to where
fletcher henderson might be/ some all colored spot
& he/ jim wd buy lotsa whiskey/ & listen
seem to be treating daddy & his girl/ who waz poor
but they were working making sure jim didnt kill anyone
thinking he waz some mad music. another kinda miles davis/
an assassin of his own love. so on the way back from anywhere
my daddy & his girl rode in the front/ jim lay molten on the back.
& he wd stay in his room til his parents left campus or
til his wife's lover left town.
everybody knew abt her/ that she liked to touch women's legs
& mouths/ that there waz nothing cd be done
cuz she had connections/ & he waz so sharp & he took her
& the sorority took her/ & there waz nothing cd be done
cuz she waz beautiful. & then there he waz & wd you mess
wit him who is anger/ a malignant fury in his glance
when somebody wanted to say/ what everybody knew abt her
& they did leave him alone. & how cd he not know
& if he did know/ it must be/ he really is a foreigner
not a whole man himself/ to have a woman so
a woman so fulla beauty/ she shared when a breeze fell
from her hands/ & he never left her.
i waited & waited to meet him
& i've just found out how i waz in love wit this man
who has died/ & i never knew him to touch
i never even saw a picture/ but not far from me
never far from me/ i've kept a lover
who waznt all-american/ who didnt believe/ wdnt straighten up.
oh i've loved him in my own men/ sometimes hateful
sometimes subtle like high fog & sun/ but who i loved
is yr not believing. i loved yr bitterness & hankered
after that space in you where you are outta control/
where you cannot touch or you wd kill me/ or somebody else
who loved you. i never even saw a picture
& i've loved him all my life
he is all my insanity
& anyone who loves me wd understand

(michael exits. lights fade)

Scene 2

(sean at his desk with a camera, claire in scarlet camisole & lace panties is dancing sensuously, posing, with intentions of making love)

CLAIRE

ooohhh . . . take my picture daddy

SEAN

that's what i'm here for

CLAIRE

(on bed)

how's this? how's this? i dont want to take anymore pictures. i think i might be coming down wit something

SEAN

well. i'm not

CLAIRE

coming down/ or with something?

SEAN

do you value yr life?

CLAIRE

maybe it's just the way i smell today/ i dont smell like you at all/ see/ these aint yours/ & this neither/ i know/ i know/ i smell like andrew/ no/ charlie/ oh that cdnt be/ i dont know anybody named charlie . . . i know/ i smell like willie/ wondrous willie

SEAN

cant leave willie alone can ya/ say you coming down with something/ & cant talk bout nothing but how willie smells

CLAIRE

i gotta . . . i gotta tell you something

SEAN

huh

CLAIRE

i got rhinestones up there now/ did ya know that

SEAN

no/ uh huh i didnt

CLAIRE

yeah. rhinestones & palm leaves & a great big ol magnolia

SEAN

willie put alla that up there

CLAIRE

no. now let me see. who waz it/ i mighta forgot somebody john/ no/ andrew/ no . . . oh i know who gave claire all these treasures/ waz claire. i waz planning on being the sea & bein swept over by some pirates/ ya know/ carried on a rakish sea captain's back/ into a lagoon/ ya gonna be a pirate sean/ i gotta treasure up in there/ a magic magnolia

SEAN

say you coming down with something/ something from willie

CLAIRE

oh/ yr being too serious/ willie's just a sweet friend

SEAN

willie aint been straight since NAM/ & willie aint the only one neither. there's andrew/ & charlie/ & james

CLAIRE

no. you are the only one/ c'mon you got it/ mama's got it all for you/ a fine magnolia wrapped in rhinestones/ c'mon it's right here/ i waz only teasing

SEAN

c'mere claire/ i got something for ya. if you ever so much as look at willie/ or come down with something/ i'm gonna take you down to the 500 club on fillmore/ & give everybody some of that magnolia . . .

(sean forces whiskey into claire's mouth)

. . . understand

CLAIRE

(backs up wiping her face)

i dont need you for that/ sean. i can do that by myself. but you can come watch/ if you wanna

SEAN

you gonna watch something/ you gonna watch me/ get alla them rhinestones/ palm leaves & every petal of magnolia

(sean picks claire up/ tumbles onto bed with her)

CLAIRE

oooohh . . . come to mama . . .

SEAN

you know what alexandre dumas wrote abt his mama/ claire?

CLAIRE

no . . . i dont know nothing abt that. why do i have to think abt that now

SEAN

the only crime for which i will never forgive myself is to have doubted my mother. aint that heavy?

CLAIRE

yeah, it's heavy

(sean gets up)

ooooh sean . . .

SEAN

ooohh michael

CLAIRE

who the fuck is michael?

SEAN

(crossing to claire)

you say you got palm leaves up in there?

(lights out)

Scene 3

(lights up immediately on nevada & earl, in formal evening dress, at a party at nevada's house)

NEVADA

earl/ do you see that/ i cant believe anyone is still wearing costume jewelry/ especially at my party

EARL

not everyone can afford real gold/ nevada

NEVADA

then they shdnt wear anything

EARL

that's an option . . .

NEVADA

i wonder when sean's going to get here

EARL

he told me he waz studying "the count of monte cristo" by dumas

NEVADA

the count of monte cristo/ sean knows quite enuf abt swashbuckling awready

EARL

he needs what you & i have/ nevada. he needs some sense of his future. that a black man lived to hear his name shouted in the streets

NEVADA

but dumas waz so common/ earl

EARL

he waz a man of letters/ and passion

NEVADA

alexandre dumas waz the same as these wild niggah artists are today

EARL

dont try to rein him in too much/ nevada. he's gotta be free

NEVADA

he shd come here/ i cd tell him how dumas' bastard son felt abt his father's freedom.

(low light up on sean in bed with claire)

SEAN

alexandre dumas took to women/ adulation/ scandal & wine

(light down on sean)

NEVADA

you wanted sean to know that/ earl

EARL

yeah. see whatta niggah cd do when the rest of us were slaves

NEVADA

no/ no. YOU all were slaves/ i keep telling you that/ earl. you remember the nite i passed my bar exam/ & we all three got drunk & went to the sapphire room/ & i danced on the bar & put on one of the other girls' wigs/ & you & sean were so happy. i cd see you/ letting me go/ letting me be wild/ & i want to give him some part of me like in the bar . . . wd you get sean/ earl/ wd you . . .

(lights fade)

Scene 4

(sean & michael in bed)

SEAN

i really like the way you look/ sleepin like that/ yr face in the mornin/ is a blessin/ some women/ i look at them/ i wanna get up . . . but you/ i wanna go back to the womb with you

MICHAEL

sean/ somebody's been sleeping here recently/ just like me

SEAN

you know somebodies have been sleeping here/ & you know yr here now & that is all you need to know . . . damn/ you are so soft . . .

MICHAEL

no/ it's important/ i cant lay in any old body's morning & evening smells/ i want an arrangement for me/ i know/ when i'm here i'll bring my japanese mats & we can sleep on the floor

SEAN

(laughing)

you mean yr not upset abt them bein here/ just bout where you sleep?

MICHAEL

uh huh

SEAN

well/ i'll be damned. what kinda woman are ya/ dont you wanna know/ why i need somebody else sides you/ & where am i going & who is that/ how much do i love you & all that stuff?

MICHAEL

no

SEAN

well/ i dont know how long this is gonna last/ but it sure feels funny

MICHAEL

feels funny?

SEAN

dont be getting all holy & above possession/ aint a bitch in the world cant get jealous & loud/ they been

running me crazy

MICHAEL

that's them

(she begins push-ups)

i cant do that. i'm physically incapable of chasing & arguing abt a man/ i just cant. i dont have the energy

SEAN

awright/ but i'm not gonna hold you to any of this/ i think yr just feeling well taken care of . . . my ladies are genuinely wild/ & feline/ they're not gonna like this very much

MICHAEL

they're not gonna like what

SEAN

you n me together/ see like lovers in bed/ come on/ michael

MICHAEL

oh/ i'm not gonna be that way/ you'll see. i work hard as you to make my art take up the slack for my life

SEAN

you know/ alexandre dumas had a thing for dancers/ too

MICHAEL

i didnt know claire waz a dancer

SEAN

oh yeah?

MICHAEL

(crossing to bed)

oh yeah

SEAN

oh yeah?

MICHAEL

oh yeah . . . i won't make any trouble at all/ sean. i wont make any trouble at all.

(lights fade)

Scene 5

(earl & claire, at earl's office)

CLAIRE

alexandre dumas waz still a niggah/ sean must know that alla those fancy waistcoats/ 2 bastards/ a boy & a girl by two different women/ he had women all over paris/ hanging out wit the fellas/ victor hugo/ alfred de vigny/ alla them still thot he was a niggah. some actress usedta have all the house windows opened in the theater cuz when alexandre dumas showed up/ when he showd up she claimed she smelled an acrid stench/ the stench of a niggah. sean smells like a niggah/ maybe i'll tell him he smells like alexandre dumas

EARL

you shd do that/ claire

CLAIRE

you gotta nerve saying what i shd & shdnt do. the little time i spent wit you/ if i tried to kiss you/ you got scared.

EARL

claire/ that's not why i left you

CLAIRE

then tell me why you never loved me like i wanted

EARL

because i respect myself/ that's why

CLAIRE

well earl/ you smell like a niggah too/ if you sweat. do you sweat/ earl?

EARL

don't you remember

CLAIRE

have you ever sweat/ earl?

EARL

til the bed's wringing wet

CLAIRE

(pauses)

i'd rather talk this kinda talk to sean

EARL

suit yrself

(lights out)

Scene 6

(michael choreographing a dance in sean's studio. claire enters)

MICHAEL

(responding to her movement & music)

that's it . . .

CLAIRE

hey hey hey/ if it isnt michael. it is michael/ isnt it?

MICHAEL

yes it is/ & yr claire for sure

CLAIRE

yep/ the one & only/ where's sean

MICHAEL

i think he went out . . . yes/ he's out/ you wanna wait?

CLAIRE

i dont need an invitation from you

(michael resumes dance/ claire watches from sean's desk)

i need some entertainment. i'm bored. why dontchu entertain me/ yr a dancer/ do a dance/ for me

MICHAEL

i am doing a dance/ & you can watch/ but it's not entertainment

CLAIRE

(crosses to bed, takes off shoes & takes out some cocaine)

you artists are so damn serious/ dont you ever have fun?

MICHAEL

(seeing the coke, she gets a glass of whiskey for claire)

here claire/ i'm sorry to have been so inhospitable

(michael takes cocaine snorter from claire, crosses room & leans on sean's desk)

CLAIRE

(facetiously)

you want some?

MICHAEL

i wd really like you to relax around me/ claire

CLAIRE

i want to relax around sean

MICHAEL

thats what i mean/ claire. you dont haveta stay all nervous & fidgety til he gets here. i cd give you a massage

CLAIRE

dont you bother. i'll get plenty muscle relaxation when sean gets here

MICHAEL

you really like him dont you/ you like the way he touches you/ huh?

CLAIRE

oh yes. he touches me somewhere & i cd feel him all over

MICHAEL

i cd make you feel like that even when sean's not here/ when he's working or sleeping/ there's a technique i learned in dance/ that'll really help

CLAIRE

is it fun?

MICHAEL

(crossing to bed)

oh yes/ it's a lot of fun. so relax yr whole body & let yr breath flow even & slow/ just as if sean waz with you/

(she massages claire)

is this how sean makes you feel?

CLAIRE

not quite/ why you keep talking about sean? oh stop . . . yr hurting me!

(sean enters from bedroom/ groggy/ grasps situation & crosses to bed. michael realizes he is in the room, but holds claire to the bed forcibly)

SEAN

claire/ what the fuck are you doin/ michael/ get the hell up offa her

CLAIRE

(struggling to get out of michael's grip)

i thot you were out

SEAN

yeah/ i bet you thot i waz out/ so you cd get michael involved in yr sick shit/ get the hell outta here

MICHAEL

sean/ there is nothing wrong/ i waz just giving claire a massage

SEAN

whatchu need a massage for/ claire/ whatchu coming over here to get a massage for

MICHAEL

(still sneaking some of claire's cocaine)

sean/ what's wrong with you? i gave claire a massage/ & that's all

SEAN

(trying to get claire off bed and out)

damn. i cant trust you to stay outta trouble for a minute. claire/ you set this up. you were probably bored/ is that it claire/ were you bored/ so you thot it wd be good to play with michael/ get outta here/ no/ dont put on yr shoes/ carry them/ just get out

CLAIRE

keep yr hands offa me

(to michael, who has her cocaine snorter)

give me that/ michael

(michael smiles, returns snorter)

SEAN

shut up & get out/ go away right now/ & think of something else to do wit yrself/ just get the hell out

(claire exits, sean crosses down stage right to michael, who is sitting on her stool)

michael/ just what the fuck waz that all abt?

MICHAEL

i told you/ nothing. i just gave the girl a massage

SEAN

(grabs her arm)

well/ why were you laying all over the girl/ just to give the girl a massage

MICHAEL

i told you/ nothing

SEAN

anything else you wanna tell me

MICHAEL

(breaking away)

no. yr hurtin my arm/ i dont like it when you hurt me. that's all i have to say

SEAN

(reluctantly apologetic)

i'm sorry michael/ it waznt yr fault/ it waz that simple perverted bitch . . .

(sean caresses michael, who is smiling innocently. lights out.)

Scene 7

(claire, in her bedroom)

CLAIRE
be soft & brown/ be slick & claire
remember who covers yr back/ yr backside
is coverin yr back/ miz claire
yr body is the blood & the flesh
god gave his only daughter/ to save alla his sons
daddy waz right/ daddy waz absolutely right/
give a man exactly what he wants & he wants you/
simple as that. but what about claire
claire wants a present
a lil jack daniels/ a lil blow

(claire slugs some whiskey/ rubs coke on her gums)

i know what feels good/ tender
like the inside of my thigh

but i dont know anybody who wd give claire a lil
just a lil
i'm just too good feeling
for such a simple lil thing
i'm just too good feeling
for such a simple lil thing

(lights fade on claire)

Scene 8

(lights up on sean & michael in same position as we left them)

SEAN

michael michael michael/ sweet lil michael/ smart lil michael/ can i take yr picture/ now i wanna lick yr face/ i wanna lick yr lips yr everywhere/ hey smartass/ michael come over here. i want you to see something

(sean gets remote control slide changer/ brings michael next to him. light flashes indicates slides)

look at this/ here's a woman/ she's a muslim

MICHAEL

she's a muslim/ well/ how cd you know that?

SEAN

i watched her every morning/ she lives cross the street on the 7th floor/ she gets up at 6:15/ everyday/ she must cuz she's in the shower by 6:20/ sometimes i cant get to sleep for thinking bout her in the shower with the water coatin her skin/ she smells like magnolia . . .

MICHAEL

how do you know?

SEAN

she shops round the open market like i do/ i even tip my hat to her old man/ when i see him/ & then i think bout how he cdnt imagine how much pleasure she gives me . . .

MICHAEL

(joking a lil)

that's horrible/ sean. yr no better than a peeping tom

(light flashes for another slide)

oh no . . .

SEAN

what do you mean "oh no." these niggahs mean business. you see what they did to that dummy/ dont you/

knocked her plaster ass right down on the ground/ yes they did. & just cuz they felt like it.

MICHAEL

i suppose that means something to you. besides they are vicious/ they wda loved to hit a living woman/ sean/ dont you see/ they were wishing that mannequin waz a real body to break.

SEAN

yeah. yr absolutely right & i've got it all there in that frame. i gotta whole dynamic of centuries/ in a two-dimensional plane/ i'm telling you michael/ stick with me/ i'm a genius for unravelling the mysteries of the darker races/ sometimes our spit seems to be brine from the sea & those ships/ a grease burn on some woman looks like a brand/ michael/ i swear i know who we are . . . i know who we are

MICHAEL

there's more . . . there's gotta be more/ sean

SEAN

like dance/ right? somethin i cant have or return to/ somethin dim in memory/ barely articulated

(michael begins to dance)

MICHAEL
i am space & winds
like a soft rain or a torrent of dust/ i can move
be free in time/ a moment is mine always
i am not like a flower at all
tho i can bloom & be a wisp of sunlight
i'm a rustling of dead leaves
collections of ol women by the weddin
the legs of a cotton club queen
& so familiar with tears
alla this is mine/ so long as i breathe/ i'm gonna dance
for all of us/ everybody dead/ everybody busy
everybody too burdened to jump thru a nite
a hot & bluesy jump in the guts of ourselves
a dance is like a dream/ i can always remember
make it come again . . . i can make it come again
SEAN

(crossing to michael)

michael/ a photograph is like a fingerprint/ it stays
& stays forever/ we cd have something forever/ just how
we want it. give me a camera & i cd get you anything
you wanted/ breeze/ a wad of money/ madness/ women on
back porches kneading bread/ stars falling/ ice cream
& drunks & forever/ i cd give you forever in a night sky/
michael/ i cd give you love/ pure & full/ in a photograph . . .
when i get these museum shows i'm gonna give you whatever
you want. anything you want.

(sean embraces michael/ a horn honks repeatedly)

MICHAEL

sean/ is that anybody for you?

SEAN

no

(sean & michael continue to kiss & hug. nevada enters, crosses the room without being noticed by the lovers)

NEVADA

so. yr working/ huh. too busy to be bothered with me/ less the rent's due. or you need some film. or yr "model" needs whatever those kinda women need. you dont love me. you never loved me. me/ nevada/ is nothing to you but a few bucks & a easy fuck/ niggah you never took my picture/ you never take my picture/ you dont think i'm beautiful or nothing, just these slut artist bitches/ beautiful women of color/ with good form. an artist/ an ass. that's what i've been messing with/ i cd have had anybody i wanted/ i am not an ordinary nothing/ my family waz manumitted in 1843/ yall were still slaves/ carrying things for white folks/ just slaves/ that's what you come from & i cd do better/

(nevada rips photographs from walls and desk, tears them to bits.)

i dont need you or nothing from you do you hear me tramp/ sean do you hear me/ i dont need you/ yr photographs/ yr dick/ nothing/ you've got nothing i want/ i just wanted you to take my picture . . . my picture/ make my face belong to you/ like her/ like that slut who cant talk/ cant you talk bitch/ low down cunt/ if i waz you i'd bury myself

(michael swings at nevada, sean grabs nevada and pulls her away)

SEAN

i dont want yr face/ nevada. i got what i want from you/ you love me dont you? well/ that's all i want/ i'm probably the only real thing in yr life & i can feel it/ how you love me/ but if you want me to take yr picture/ i gotta see something in yr face/ yr love for me in yr face/ ya hear? now let me get back to work.

NEVADA

(regaining her composure)

(to sean)

i'll expect yr call . . .

(to michael)

when you finish yr work.

(nevada leaves quietly. sean picks up fragments of photos/ is on the verge of rage. michael is rocking catatonically on the stool)

SEAN

(holding fragments of photos)

see michael. lil bits of people/ lil bits of flesh/ living folks. i've got em right here. i finally got something/ breathing/ this must be that old dude/ looked sorta like my grandpa/ drunk. oh god waz he drunk. stink too. but his hands/ his hands were like mississippi fields/ his hands were cotton & blood/ & strong/ that muthafuckah waz strong/ musta been a helluva ladies man/ wearin the dirtiest cashmere coat i ever saw/ but his hands/ i got those. damn/ michael dont you understand anything? there. there are the eyes of the cashier at the porno house & this is niggahs asleep in the park. what's this. oh this is fog/ but my god i gotta world now/ i gotta world i'm making in my image/ i got something for a change/ lil sean david who never got over on nothing but bitches/ is building a world in his image/ YALL GOT THAT? michael/ you gotta understand/ you haveta understand/ i saw these things/ these people gave me something i love/ things i love . . .

(low light up on ecrl)

EARL

sean david loves trinkets/ like alexandre dumas showing up at the duc d'orleans for an audience with the king/ dressed up like a mardi gras clown. keeping women waiting in the wings/ taking his scenarios from a vast collection of parisian pussy. yr gonna haveta marry nevada/ say when dumas married ida ferrier/ he said/ "my dear fellow, it waz the only way to get rid of her."

(light out on earl)

SEAN

nevada is really death/ she gotta be death to do something like this/ that's why i cant do her portrait

MICHAEL

sean/ did i ever tell you abt my grandma/ the one who sat on her porch with a shotgun/ sean. i'm talking to you

SEAN

what are you talking abt

MICHAEL

my grandma from carolina who got a shotgun to take care of her family when grandpa waz lynched

SEAN

please michael/ not now

MICHAEL

if not now when/ when sean? i sat in this room & watched you take all this shit from some bitch cuz she's got money & you ain't/ cuz you think being a nigger is being nothing/ bein put upon & taken/ well i'm telling you i dont come from that/ & i cant watch you be that/ my people took care of themselves. i am an artist too. i go to work/ in a nasty ol restaurant/ & you let some woman destroy yr photographs/ well/ my grandma carried a shotgun/ do you understand me

SEAN

i dont believe you/ i just dont believe you. yr making things up again. it's not the same for you & me

MICHAEL

oh yes it is. it's our lives/ our grandparents & their uncles/ it's how we came to be/ by taking our lives seriously/ we fight for every breath every goddamn day/ do you know that

SEAN

i wda known if niggahs waz alla what you say/ i wd know abt something else besides the welfare/ the white folks/ heroin & whores/ darling

MICHAEL

i'm telling you the truth. I'm telling you my grandma carried a shotgun & sat on her porch. telling us abt garvey/ du bois/ the colored horse soldiers & jack johnson

SEAN

michael you got too much/ & you know too goddamn much

MICHAEL

it's ours. alla ours. dont nobody own history/ cant nobody make ours but us. & look at what you've done to yrself

SEAN

no. dont look at me/ what i did to myself/ huh/ no. look down on fillmore at the junkies & little girls selling pussy/ the pawn shops & bars/ specializing in knife fights & chitlins/ some muthafucking history. well/ i'll tell you/ my daddy hadda monkey/ do you hear/ a monkey he treated better than me

MICHAEL

we're alla that. alla the blood & the fields & the satchels dragging in the dust. all the boogies & stairways late at night oozing the scent of love & cornbread/ the woods smelling of burnt flesh & hunger

SEAN

how come nobody ever told me

MICHAEL

i'm telling you. my grandma's trying to tell you. she speaks thru me.

SEAN

shit. fuck yr grandma

(michael is furious/ crosses to get her dance clothes & shawl/ crosses back to sean)

MICHAEL

you selfish muthafucker

(michael exits)

SEAN

grandma/ grandma's telling me . . . huh/ my grandma don't talk . . . my daddy speaks for her

(apartment lights fade as light comes up on earl as sean's daddy)

EARL

(daddy)

i wish she wd die/ she's giving me ulcers she dont know where she's at/ dont even know who i am sometimes she thinks i'm papa/ but i'm telling you i gotta put up this fence/ cuz she tries to run off all the time. if i ever opened that gate i'd never find her/ i'm saying she drove me to this/ wandering out talking crazy bout/ she wants to go home . . .

SEAN

shit/ this is her home

EARL

(daddy)

is as good as her home/ but i cant let her out/ cuz she wont come back/ sooner she dies i'll have some peace/ cuz she's old she's old/ & she falls down a lot

SEAN

i peeked in grandma's room/ i smelled urine/ dirty clothes/ the scent of the old woman's crotch/ she waz bruised & sleeping in her day dress/ her bed was unmade

EARL

(daddy)

i tell ya she gotta go sometime/ i gotta have a life of my own/ what more cd she ask of me . . . shit . . . i'm just her son

(light down on earl)

SEAN

you didn't see me/ your son. i'm waiting daddy/ just like you/ waiting for a one man show/ waiting to be seen & touched/ i am waiting to come back from the forest . . . daddy/ i want that monkey to die

(sean gets his portfolio, takes it to his desk. he looks at the photos he's been hiding from everyone. nevada enters/ sean quickly hides portfolio)

SEAN

(quickly hiding portfolio)

what the fuck do you want?

NEVADA

sean/ i'm really sorry bout the mess i made/ but i'm on my way over to the museum/ and i wanted to know if you still want me to try to get that show for you

SEAN

get the hell on away/ wd you

NEVADA

so/ the greatest photographer in the world is gonna give up an opportunity for an exhibit

SEAN

i'll get it myself/ i dont need you to do that

NEVADA

all by yrself/ yr gonna build yr name with yr own ignorant lil self/ well/ i tried

(nevada crosses as if to leave/ turns back)

oh. here's the lens you were looking at last week/ it might come in handy

SEAN

i dont want it/ nevada

NEVADA

aw sean/ take it/ i want you to have it/ for yr work

SEAN

OK nevada/ leave it over there somewhere/ just go away

(nevada carefully puts lens on the bed)

NEVADA

i love you

SEAN

i know you do. just leave me alone for a while/ awright? just leave/ nevada. i'm gonna tell you one more time. go away.

(nevada looks at lens, then at sean)

NEVADA

one more time/ huh . . . one more time/ one more lens . . .

(nevada exits. sean goes to bed & puts lens on camera, smilin & enjoying himself. michael enters quietly/ watches him carefully;

SEAN

(to himself)

i cda promised that bitch anything

MICHAEL

for what/ one more lens?

SEAN

michael/ dont mess wit me

MICHAEL

i wont have to/ i'm leaving

SEAN

good/ i'm not doing portraits this afternoon

MICHAEL

will you listen/ i'm not staying anymore

SEAN

what the hell is this/ a loving gesture?

MICHAEL

in a way/ it'll keep me loving myself

SEAN

i dont play that shit/ michael. when i am working/ i am working/ when i'm fucking i'm fucking/ & now i am working/ we'll talk abt this later

MICHAEL

i'm not going anywhere yet

SEAN

i dont take no orders from no bitch

(michael has moved to sean's desk, and has found his portfolio)

MICHAEL

sean/ these are incredible/ why havent you ever shown these?

SEAN

michael/ what are you doing? those guys are ded anyway/ that waz a long time ago/ i am not showing no photographs of muthafuckahs who died in fronta me/ their heads blown off/ legs coming out their fucking eyes/ michael you are outta yr mind/ you got the nerve to say i'm cold-blooded

MICHAEL

(looking thru portfolio)

isnt this something to you?

SEAN

(making sexual gestures)

what has fucking & kissing gotta do with my work?

MICHAEL

i'm not talking bout what you do with me & nevada & claire

SEAN

yr crazy

MICHAEL

OK/ so i'm crazy. but i know what you are capable of

SEAN

you dont know a damn thing abt me/ cept i take care of yr never get enuf ass

MICHAEL

i cant get enuf if its not real

SEAN

yr really outta yr mind/ stupid bitch/ i know how to deal with you/ or any other bitch comes in here

MICHAEL

i thot you were telling me abt yr art/ not how you stay alive

SEAN

i do whatever i haveta to stay alive

MICHAEL

that's what i mean/ yr not even trying to be an artist/ yr trying to stay alive

SEAN

i thot art waz survival

MICHAEL

no. it's love. it's fighting to give something/ it's giving yrself to someone/ who loves you

SEAN

give myself?

MICHAEL

yeah. lettin everybody in & giving up what is most treasured

SEAN

i aint got no treasures

MICHAEL

then yr not alive

SEAN

well/ you still here. you visit dead folks often?

MICHAEL

sometimes. sometimes i prove i'm alive by watching em

SEAN

well. i dont haveta do that

MICHAEL

then let me go

SEAN

you are sucha dumb bitch. if it's not you/ there'll be somebody else

MICHAEL

forever?

SEAN

long as i'm living

MICHAEL

what a waste of time

SEAN

waste of time/ say you dont like how i do you?

MICHAEL

i dont like thinking that you think yr dick means more to me than yr work/ you dont give yrself anymore than anyone is willing to give you

SEAN

(grabbing michael)

nobody gives me nothing

MICHAEL

i cd give you something

SEAN

(pulls her down, fighting)

oh yeah? you come round here to get what i got/ i give it to you & you give me what you got/ that's what's going on here

MICHAEL

that's not enuf

SEAN

it's plenty/ i'm living aint i/ i'm not out on the street am i/ i'm not pimping anybody

MICHAEL

arent you?

SEAN

you so damn dumb/ i explained all this to you a million times

MICHAEL

i thot you were a man

SEAN

i fuck you fool/ you still dont know i'ma man?

MICHAEL

i mean somebody who loves in the world/ loves himself & his work & some people

SEAN

i told you i'm gonna be the greatest photographer in the world

MICHAEL

how abt being the photographer you haveta be

SEAN

(lets her go/ crosses to bed)

you talking nonsense

MICHAEL

(aggressively follows him)

will you love yrself to keep working/ if the muthafuckahs in washington say yr work aint shit/ if the galleries in northbeach say niggah/ yr work aint shit/ can you love yr photographs/ sean/ if they dont get you what you want?

SEAN

(pushes her down on bed)

no. & wd you leave me the fuck alone

MICHAEL

i'm not afraid of you

SEAN

well/ then get afraid

(sean grabs michael again/ more struggling/ then he lets her go. she moves away/ in pain)

MICHAEL

when you work on yr pictures like you worked on me/ i'll believe you/ right now i think yr fulla shit & i'm ashamed cuz i believed you at least loved photography

SEAN

i do. i do. yr getting everything confused michael. i dont know what yr talking abt/ i do love my pictures

MICHAEL

do you love me?

SEAN

why you gonna ask me something like that?

MICHAEL

cuz i wanted to see if you'll ever be honest

SEAN

i dont know/ i dont know what yr talking abt/ i wanna say i love you/ michael/ i wanna say it/ but i dont know what yr talking abt/ i wanna know/ michael/ i wanna tell you something/ but i really dont know

(michael crosses toward door/ puts on her shawl to leave/ turns around to sean)

MICHAEL

you cd try/ say anything . . . anything that's true

(lights fade on michael in the background)

SEAN
when you get to be a man/ you can go to the whorehouse
with me/ that's what he usedta say
tho he brought the whores home/ & fucked em
& beat em & fought em & laughed all nite long

lil boy what did you do/ while he fed his monkey?

when you can swim like me/ he said/ you'll be a man
& stuck me in the water with my diapers on.
at dinner time daddy waz asleep/ head on the table
& bottle nearby

lil boy what did you do/ while he fed his monkey?

soft-eyed child with good straight legs
soft-eyed child with wet sheets every nite
i lay there all day til they dried sometimes
to be a man
lil boy silent & making no trouble/ what did you do/
while he fed his monkey?
my daddy didnt like me/ daddy didnt like me
he usedta say/ mama neither but it dont matter
cuz i'm not theirs no how/ i'ma man
i am a man
& he wd cry & drink his vodka/ with the lady whose name
i cdnt know/ cuz i waz running the hallways
looking for a daddy
lil boy lil boy/ niggah tell me
what did you do while he fed his monkey
michael/ what did i do while he fed his monkey . . .
what did i do/ while he fed his monkey
MICHAEL

(moving toward sean but not touching him)

you just wanted somebody to love you/ that's all
you just wanted somebody to love you

(lights fade to black)

Scene 9

(nevada & earl, on the porch of sean's rooming house)

NEVADA

go on earl/ if you go talk with him/ he'll listen/ he won't listen to me

EARL

oh really?

NEVADA

yes really. he thinks you can handle yrself/ n women like me just make him mad/ most of the time

EARL

nevada/ you ever think abt yrself sometimes steada sean? i mean goddamn/ yr a helluva prize/ let him come to terms with you for a change

NEVADA

no. i'm scared

EARL

scared?

NEVADA

not of sean/ everything. i'm just wound up over myself/ i cant reach out to anybody/ but i cant let go & i cant hold on & go speak to him/ earl/ i wanta drink

EARL

you dont need a drink/ nevada/ i guess i just dont know why you gotta do this

NEVADA

i need him/ he lets me breathe or something like i can feel/ i get close & i haveta have that/ i haveta have that/ that's all i've got

EARL

awright i'll talk to him/ but you need something else

NEVADA

no. i dont need nothin else. i gotta office/ i gotta porsche/ i gotta family & a name/ & i never had nothin for myself/ just this stupidness/ running around being important/ bein highfaluting/ all this time pushing for what isnt ever gonna be mine/ i do i do/ need somebody

EARL

somebody quiet & concerned & rich & brown & never been mean & wont be/ really nevada/ sean doesnt know bout much more than women & cruelty/ i usedta wish i cd be half of what he feels in women/ just a lil less correct/ but you aint it/ nevada/ you arent ready for what you think you want

NEVADA

oh yeah/ i am/ i am as ready as that michael/ that slutty dancer

EARL

nevada/ you know yr lovely/ & shd be handled gently

NEVADA

stop it

EARL

awright. awright/ i'm gonna go right up there & get him so you can get off listening to him tell you to take yr hincty black ass home/ cuz you may not have anything you want/ but you got everything sean ever dreamed of/ & he cant stand it/ he really cant stand it

(earl watches as nevada takes a swig from her flask/ lights fade)

Scene 10

(michael & sean in bed/ michael begins a ritual dance, like a fairy tale in motion)

MICHAEL

broken boats/ bones & spit/ useless solitary legs/ legs & splintered trees/ winds & sea jumped thru flesh & breath/ twenty men tossed on shore/ some in clothes soppin in seaweed/ others with swollen bleeding bodies/ the storm had thrown them in a strange land/ they were looking for the silver snake/ they knew the silver snake kept a woman whose kiss wd make hunger disappear & wounds heal/ the woman who belonged to the star-lit snake swung her ankle from an acacia tree in the face of the shipwrecked sailors/ they stood afraid/ the woman's toes rested on the scarlet tongue of a snake so bright/ the night drew back & ran off with the sea/ while the star-lit silver snake kisst the corners of her mouth/ daring the universe to take her

(michael gets back onto bed with sean)

oh/ i love it/ making things beautiful. you/ my star-lit silver snake/ do you love it?

SEAN

(getting up)

yes. yes/ but that's too simple. i know/ i'ma tell you one

MICHAEL

you gonna tell me one?

SEAN

yes. that's right. me. i'ma be it. the photographer of all time. look out ansel/ here i am/ ms. arbus/ gordon parks & van derzee/ my name is sean david/ a man from the wild with a lens to capture anything that moves/ anything that sweats/ any shadow breath/ figure or premonition/ yes indeed. i can bring you the world shining grainy focused or shaking/ a godlike phenomenon/ sean david. that'll be $5000 for the first three sittings/ you'll have to see my secretary abt that/ actually/ i'll see my secretary abt seein my tailor/ i realize yr not accustomed to the visions of a man of color who has a gift/ but fear not/ i'll give it to ya a lil at a time. i am only beginning to startle/ to mesmerize & reverse the reality of all who can see. i gotta thing bout niggahs/ my folks/ that just wont stop/ & we are so correct for the photograph/ we profile all the time/ styling/ giving angle & pattern/ shadows & still-life. if somebody sides me cd see the line in niggahs/ the texture of our lives/ they wda done it/ but since nobody has stepped forward/ here i am. yes. sean david. the MOST sensitive MOST conscientious meticulous muthafuckah ever in a darkroom/ oh is that the museums again/ i'll call them back/ i only have 4 assistants/ oh accompany you to paris/ & then to rio? i'll see/ you understand/ of course/ i must go to scandinavia to accept the nobel prize next week/ i think/ next week

(sean takes michael's hand/ they stand as if accepting the nobel prize)

yes. i grew up in the west/ same as dead-eye dick & eric dolphy. i never saw a piece of art/ til i got my first piece of ass/ essie carlton 11½/ & she didnt like to smootch or nothing/ just give it up. i learned to work in the dark like that/ gentlemen/ i've hand-held every photograph in the dark like that/ like essie.

(sean crosses quickly/ light flashes for slide)

look at these lil girls/ michael. aint that something/ see how they're digging into each other

MICHAEL

my god sean/ why didnt you stop them

SEAN

no/ michael/ this is more important than stopping that one fight/ look at the hatred in that child/ she hates another lil girl/ exactly like herself/ this is a colored childhood michael/ me stopping that one fight wont have done anything

MICHAEL

but sean/ they're bleeding

SEAN

yeah. that's the point

MICHAEL

they're children & you've made them animals

SEAN

but now i'm holding the nobel prize cuz i . . . i cd see niggahs living in the dark/ & my acceptance of this prize means/ we are alive/ anybody cd see us now/ we're here on earth/ human beings . . .

MICHAEL

awright then/ continue. & this time i wanta see you tell em straight out that you are/ osiris returned & yr

camera has been the missing organ in our forsaken land. hail sean david/ osiris/ king of visions & dream

SEAN

uh huh. that's right gentlemen/ my photographs are the contours of life unnoticed

MICHAEL

unrealized & suspect

SEAN

no buckwheat here

MICHAEL

no farina & topsy

SEAN

here we have the heat of our lives

MICHAEL

in our ordinaryness we are most bizarre

SEAN

prone to eccentricity/ even in our language

MICHAEL

our form is one of a bludgeoned thing/ wrapped in rhinestones & gauze/ blood almost sparkling/ a wildness lurks always

SEAN

a wildness lurks always

MICHAEL

blood almost sparkling . . . i feel like dancing the sun out the sky

SEAN

(twirls her, picks her up, starts to carry her to bedroom)

& i'm gonna help you michael . . . i'm gonna help you

(earl enters)

EARL

hey man/ what are you doing to nevada?

SEAN

(putting michael down)

i aint doing nothing to nevada

(michael moves to sean's desk/ puts sean's hat on)

EARL

i've never seen her like this/ even when she waz throwing the hammers n nails at you/ she waz coherent/ so i brought her over to patch things up. sean/ dont treat her regular. nevada is not commonplace/ she's right downstairs & i'm going to get her . . .

(michael exits to bedroom)

SEAN

she's where?

EARL

she's downstairs/ she begged me to come talk some sense to you abt these women

SEAN

look. earl. i dont want her up here. she is like death. dont/ dont bring her around & dont listen to her/ she's got no place in my life

EARL

what are you talking abt no place in yr life/ how do you think you've been living/ on yr checks from esquire/ or claire's pussy?

SEAN

(grabs earl)

look man/ dont ever say anything like that again

EARL

oh sean/ you cant forget how colored you are for a minute. nevada dont know what she's got herself into

SEAN

i know nevada is usedta graciousness/ & soft-spoken folk. oh/ yes a marvelous afternoon/ & a brilliant bridge game/ dont you think/ shit. why dont you go on & take it/ she's probably just crass enuf to manipulate you some clients/ investments & contacts/ ahh hahahaha/ you know/ friends of the family . . .

EARL

no. that's not what i'm trying to do. i dont want to break up anything tween you & nevada/ but you & i have been friends since

SEAN

since we cd hide neath mary susan's window in the projects & watch her undress

EARL

yeah. & rip off alla the other kids' money saying we wd do their homework for em/ for a price/ or a kiss/ sometimes even a peek & a quarter

SEAN

so/ since you made the best of our situation/ & find yrself a professional man now/ why dont you take nevada off my hands/ i dont have what she needs

EARL

no/ man. that's not where i've gotten myself to/ takin yr women cuz yr having a hard time

SEAN

since when?

EARL

you've been stealing my women now/ i guess all the way from poly high thru state college/ i waz always hooking up wit the one you just left/ i cdnt figure if it waz the way i looked/ that i studied too much or waz just scared. i waz never more brave than during the strike/ i held this lil ol thing up on the wall/ & kisst her temples & whispered/ i dont know when i'm gonna wander back from this assignment/ & i am in need of something only a revolutionary woman cd give me . . .

SEAN

heh hehheh/ you didnt/ you didnt/ i never wd have believed it

EARL

yes i did/ you can ask claire. & i said something bout her duty as a woman

SEAN

i sure am glad i didnt know michael then

EARL

what is it abt michael?

SEAN

she's one beautiful woman/ beautiful woman . . . just face

EARL

when are you gonna realize what's important? there are a million beautiful faces/ & that cd be all there is/ too. you know/ i've been practicing a couple of years now/ & making some money/ i waz thinking you & i cd take

a house up in the berkeley hills/ one of those glass & redwood split levels/ witta terrace & the fog rolling in at dusk/ it cd be like the old days sean/ when you & i were discovering & making a way for ourselves/ we cd still do that/ cuz i can help you out now/ some. i mean nothing to make you feel indebted/ but you cd leave those crazy bitches alone/ claire is outta her mind/ believe me man . . .

SEAN

(grabs a camera)

hold it man/ i'm gonna do yr portrait. you got this face/ man/ i haveta have

EARL

(sincerely flattered & hopeful)

really man? yr gonna do a portrait of me/ like you do claire? man/ give me the air of d'artagnan

SEAN

have i ever failed you?

EARL

just take the pictures/ man

SEAN

(taking pictures)

here/ open yr shirt a lil . . . put that hat on right there/ let yr sensuality lick the lens/ man . . . that's it. i really think you shd consider nevada/ ya know her family cd help you a lot/ they've got all kinds of money/ from what she says sounds like they own the state of texas

(earl had been posing/ begins to hear what sean is talking about & comes back to reality)

that woman's gonna bring some man a whole lotta power/ & if it's not me/ might as well be you/ & we cd move from there. her daddy wd love to see her married/ especially to a lawyer/ he might even give you one of his insurance companies for a wedding present/ he knows nevada's gotta be paid for/ she cant give much

(lights down on sean & earl)

Scene 11

(nevada, on sean's porch daydreaming, still taking sips from her flask)

NEVADA
mama mama/ is he gonna be like daddy?
is he gonna buy me pretty things & take me
round the world? mama/ will he be handsome
& strong/ maybe from memphis/ an old family
of freedmen/ one of them reconstruction senators
for a great grandfather/ maybe he'll buy me an orchid
a silver orchid for my cotillion/ do you think
i'm pretty enuf/ mama/ for a man like that?

i'm gonna haveta get a figure
aw ya know mama like you/ i wanna set my table
pour the punch & make canapes/ & smile like you
in an organza dress/ he cd swing me
down by the lake/ & then he'll catch me almost
in the air/ & rustle my dress round my shoulders
not like he knew he cd take such a liberty
just outta he cdnt resist me
& then mama/ then i think he'll kiss me
yeah/ there on the swing in the air
by the lake/ he'll kiss me mama
& whisper nevada . . . nevada

(lights fade)

Scene 12

(sean & earl are in same positions as before)

SEAN

hmmmm. i shda taken that shot of her that morning when she waz hysterical. shit/ i missed it

EARL

now i told you i waznt interested/ besides we havent discussed that idea i had abt our house/ you know the bachelors' haven

SEAN

no we havent & we wont/ cuz michael & i are gonna get a place in the berkeley hills

EARL

man/ you absolutely amaze me

SEAN

of course i do.

EARL

now i told you nevada is downstairs

MICHAEL

(enters from bedroom/ speaking)

so she shd go away

EARL

hey/ it's just she's losing her mind & we have to help her get back her sanity

SEAN

sanity? she's always been crazy/ she'll get tired & go home/ dont worry abt her man

MICHAEL

earl/ how you been doing anyway

(claire enters)

CLAIRE

oh my/ so yr both waiting for me/ how lovely

(claire crosses to bed/ notices earl)

i've got something for you/ earl/ & you too/ michael

EARL

(crosses to exit)

i dont want nothing you got

CLAIRE

(following earl)

that's always been yr problem

EARL

(seeing nevada at door)

oh shit

NEVADA

i waznt gonna come up here/ earl. sean/ i swear/ but that cheap bitch/ she came up & i cdnt sit in the car anymore

(michael moves threateningly toward nevada)

dont throw me out/ please sean/ dont throw me out

CLAIRE

(getting between nevada and michael)

he wdnt throw you out/ sweetheart. you look ill

MICHAEL

sean/ we dont have to do this anymore

(michael tries to exit to bedroom. sean follows hugs her after grabbing her by her arms to make her listen)

CLAIRE

(to nevada)

can i get you something

NEVADA

leave me alone/ you slut/ just leave me alone

SEAN

(to michael who is still distraught in his arms)

it's okay/ nothings gonna happen/ it's gonna be awright

(nevada tries to follow sean)

EARL

(grabbing nevada)

claire cant hurt you/ nevada/ so why dont you just lighten up

CLAIRE

(to nevada)

here/ have some jack daniels/ i'll get you one of her houserobes

MICHAEL

(to sean)

they're crazy/ sean/ i dont wanna be crazy/ make it stop/ make it stop

(sean rocks michael in embrace, soothing her)

CLAIRE

(to nevada)

you can read this/ the three musketeers by alexandre dumas

(claire has poked book at nevada/ nevada tries to grab claire. earl intercedes)

SEAN

(to michael)

you're not crazy/ michael/ you're not crazy/

(michael tries to pull away from him)

listen michael/ i'm gonna take care of it/ it's gonna be awright/ you'll see

(sean leads michael out to bedroom)

EARL

now nevada/ you have known abt claire all along. remember i usedta say/ sean needed a lot & some things you wdnt give

NEVADA

sure/ I wdnt walk around naked with other people in the room/ or stick feathers up my crotch/ let him pour whiskey all over me

EARL

but it's more than that/ nevada. claire comes whenever sean calls/ she makes love in cars & trolleys/ you shd be grateful to her/ actually

CLAIRE

say thank you/ nevada/ say thank you

EARL

she's not scared of sean's quirks/ so you dont haveta be bothered with his seamy side

(michael comes running from the bedroom screaming)

MICHAEL

you all aren't in this/ get out/ go away/

(sean right behind michael, trying to take her back to the bedroom)

SEAN

i told you i'd take care of it/ now come listen to me/

MICHAEL

they are still here/ what more do you have to say

SEAN

i love you

MICHAEL

you love me

(they leave for the bedroom whispering)

NEVADA

(watching sean & michael, but speaking to earl)

when he gets famous/ he wont haveta have anything to do with trash like these simple-minded bitches

CLAIRE

(to area where sean & michael had been)

uhuh/ you dont wanna do this

NEVADA

(replying to claire unwittingly)

what are you talking abt/ the only reason sean hasnt moved outta this rat trap & taken his place in the world he belongs in/ is cuz he's got too much pride

CLAIRE

you call taking yr money/ havin too much pride?

EARL

claire/ shut up

CLAIRE

oh no/ let's have miss society experience some real low down nigger shit

EARL

why dont you mind me/ claire

CLAIRE

i dont have to mind you/ i do what i want. i'm not above that

NEVADA

yr not above or below anything/ yr filth

CLAIRE

how come i know/ sean aint never tried to get no show or no recommendations or nothing/ & you dont/ tell me nevada/ does he lie to you all the time or just when he wants money?

NEVADA

yr ridiculous/ sean is a fine artist

CLAIRE

aint he/ though

NEVADA

i know you havent much training/ but i cant see how you cd play with sean's work

CLAIRE

guess what/ nevada

EARL

claire/ lay off

CLAIRE

no no/ i want nevada to understand that i understand that sean's a niggah/ & that's why he's never gonna be great or whatever you call it/ cuz he's a niggah & niggahs cant be nothing

NEVADA

see/ earl/ she's totally claimed by her station/ she cant imagine anyone growing thru the prison of poverty to become someone like sean

CLAIRE

sean aint nothing but a niggah

(sean enters)

SEAN

is that so

CLAIRE

nevada/ i didnt know you liked niggahs

SEAN

she cant keep her hands off em

NEVADA

sean/ we can work this all out

SEAN

there's nothing to work out/ nevada

EARL

arent you being a lil hard on yrself/ nevada/ i mean we've all been rejected at one time or another

CLAIRE

you oughtta know

SEAN

so you know abt earl

(no one listens to him)

NEVADA

i just want to help you

SEAN

nevada/you need help

EARL

sean/ why dont you sit down & have a drink? nevada/ you are everything sean wanted from the time we were just kids/ he wanted the girl from the right family with good manners/ who knew something sides being felt up & having babies/ he wanted somebody who had been someplace

SEAN

where you been/ earl

EARL

you help him work out his visions

SEAN

earl/ why are you doing this?

CLAIRE

but he feels his visions right over here

NEVADA

no/ that's not true/ i can love him/ he knows i love him/ yall are just cheap & usedta nothing/ that's what he comes from & he doesnt want to leave what he thinks he belongs to/ for a good & decent life.

SEAN

he who nevada/ who you talking abt

NEVADA

he's bound to his past cuz yall remind him/ he was nothing once too/ not you earl/ i know you changed yrself but that cheap bitch

CLAIRE

actually nevada i'm very expensive/ why i havent paid my rent for two years/ much less mine & my man's

NEVADA

see earl/ i always told you she waz kept

EARL

nevada dont say that/ yr making a mistake

SEAN

it's no mistake.

CLAIRE

oh no. its awright/ you see nevada/ men just give me things. i never asked a man cept sean for anything/ they just give me things. that's why i can afford to love sean/ cuz he cant give me nothing but what you awready gave him/ so i guess that means/ i'm sporting you

(claire grabs nevada & kisses her on the mouth)

EARL

that waznt necessary/ claire

NEVADA

(in shock)

my god/ yr a lesbian

CLAIRE

oh yeah/ i dont think that's what sean thinks

(sean goes to desk, watches them in disbelief)

NEVADA

(searching thru purse)

well/ what do you want?

CLAIRE

(closing purse)

how abt a lil kiss

NEVADA

oh no/ leave me alone

CLAIRE

(grabs nevada)

what's a matter/ dont you like the way i look?

(michael enters/ joins sean at desk. earl grabs claire by the arm)

look you faggot muthafuckah get yr hands off me

(claire shoves earl)

i dont like a man who doesnt like women

EARL

now claire/ not wanting you/ has nothing to do with other women

CLAIRE

dont "now claire" me/ look nevada i know what sean likes & he likes watching women/ so you wanna help sean/ you wanna help me make sean happy/ he's always told me he wd take yr picture/ if he cd get you with a woman

NEVADA

no. no/ sean wdnt want me to do something indecent

CLAIRE

well/ now we all know why yr not enuf/ dont we nevada

EARL

please stop this. nevada cant take this sorta thing

CLAIRE

well you cant either/ so hush up

EARL

one of these days i'm gonna fuck you til you bleed

CLAIRE

are you gonna do it now/ earl

SEAN

you all shut up/ i cant do nothing more with a nymphomaniac & a hysteric. earl move your faggot ass on, man. you all get out.

(no one moves but earl who jumps at sean. sean pushes him away.)

SEAN

(to claire)

yeah you/ the one & only/ you wd kiss anybody/ huh to make believe somebody loves you/ & nobody does/

CLAIRE

(moving to fondle michael/ who is abt to stop her)

somebody will always love me

SEAN

(grabbing claire)

earl/ get them outta here. take them wherever it is you go.

EARL

man/ yr outta yr mind

CLAIRE

(to sean)

earl cant help me do a damn thing

EARL

what am i/ yr clean up my shit slave or something? i thot i waz yr friend

SEAN

then be my friend & help me

EARL

i dont want nothing to do with yr black ass

SEAN

cuz you cant keep a woman on yr own/ muthafuckah/ get that bitch there/ nevada is abt yr speed

EARL

sean/ we really have nothing in common

(earl exits. claire crosses to bed as if she planned to stay)

SEAN

(to nevada)

what are you doin here?

CLAIRE

(rushes to nevada and takes her arm)

c'mon nevada

NEVADA

(to sean)

i just wanted to talk to you alone

(claire pulls nevada out the door)

MICHAEL

i told you abt watching dead folks, sean

SEAN

(very much alone. not looking at michael)

michael

MICHAEL

yes

SEAN

i am gonna be the greatest photographer in the world

MICHAEL

i know

SEAN

my photographs are the contours of life unnoticed

(michael begins to whisper the lines)

unrealized & suspect/ no buckwheat here
no farina & topsy/ here we have the heat of our lives
in our ordinaryness we are most bizarre/ prone to
eccentricity/ even in our language . . . michael

(michael stops whispering. sean realizes she is not "with him" & moves toward her, saying:)

you are space & winds/ like a soft rain or a torrent
of dust/ you're gonna dance for everybody burdened
michael/ you can move/ you are space & winds

(michael begins to dance)

you are space & winds/ you . . . i do love you

MICHAEL

what?

SEAN

you heard me

MICHAEL

tell me again

SEAN

i love you

MICHAEL

(hugging sean)

you know/ alexandre dumas had a thing for dancers/ too

(lights fade)

END OF PLAY.